



## Almost a Majority for Reducing Inequality – Post-Election Analysis

While the final shape of Parliament will not be confirmed until 10<sup>th</sup> December, after this issue of Kete Kupu goes to print, the election result has re-elected much the same Government as the 2008 election.

Low voter turnout is something for all of us to be concerned about, as this impacts on the quality of our democracy. It does appear that a large proportion of those who did not vote were in the younger age groups and in electorates where the population is predominantly in the lower socio-economic groups. The continuing large gap divide between rich and poor is being reflected in dis-engagement with the political process from those who feel left out.

The positive news is that six of the eight political parties that have been elected to the new Parliament, holding 60 of 121 seats (one short of a majority!) have signed up to support the Closer Together Whakatata Mai reducing inequalities choice. Two of those parties, will have some role in government, United Future has signed a confidence and supply agreement and the Māori Party is likely to also have some form of confidence and supply agreement with the National Party as its new government forms.

Māori Party Co-leader Tariana Turia told us that *“The significant level of income inequality between groups of New Zealanders is well established. Persistent inequalities are compounded for Māori and Pasifika populations; and are particularly entrenched in an unacceptable incidence of hardship amongst children. Our biggest concern is that income inequality leads to the intensification of a whole range of social issues making solutions even more complex.*

*We believe the moral test of a society is not whether we add more wealth to those who are well off; but whether we provide enough for those who have too little. Our focus is on restoring our own ability to care for ourselves – in essence this is the strength of Whānau Ora, supporting our families to do for themselves.”*

Peter Dunne Leader and sole MP for United Future, told us “I very much support your call for more detailed debate around the possible ways to reduce poverty and income inequality. United Future is committed to policies which support families and boost all New Zealanders’ standard of living by creating jobs, encouraging savings and investment and other wealth-creating initiatives.”

NZCCSS will be contacting these Parties as well as the other parties – Greens, Labour, NZ First and Mana – who supported our call to reduce inequality, to remind them of their commitment and brief them on ways to put this into action.

Welfare Reform is top of the new Government’s agenda and we can expect that when Parliament reconvenes on 20 December, that they will look to introduce legislation to further implement their proposed changes to welfare.

Unfortunately, the direction of likely reforms is not encouraging – while there is talk of introducing an “investment approach” to welfare, meaning it is worth spending money to help people sort out the issues (e.g. health, training) that are keeping them out of the workforce, this is unlikely to be sufficient to address the needs of the many people on benefits living with inadequate incomes who have little prospect of entering the paid workforce in the near future. At the same time, the National Party priority actions for welfare include further toughening sanctions and an obsession with welfare fraud that is out of all proportion to the actual problem.

Spending restraints signalled by Finance Minister English will also have a recessionary effect on the economy and this raises the question of where the jobs that people on welfare are supposed to take up will come from? This question has not been satisfactorily answered and in the meantime people are left to manage as best they can until the promised jobs are supposed to materialise out of the “economy”.

The OccupyNZ demonstrations have continued throughout the country and around the world as a direct action response to the large inequalities of income and wealth that exist in NZ and elsewhere in the world. They have been hanging in with their demonstrations for a couple of months now – they don’t plan to go away in a hurry. The issue of inequality will not go away in a hurry either – unless we find a way to take concerted action to make a difference.



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# Nuku Tahī – Hikoi Tahī – Maranga Tahī Moving Forward Together

NZCCSS Services for Older People Conference, 29–30 March 2012  
Te Raukura – Te Wharewaka o Poneke

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) warmly invites you to our upcoming biennial services for older people conference 'Nuku Tahī – Hikoi Tahī – Maranga Tahī Moving Forward Together' in the heart of Aotearoa, your capital gateway and creative pulse – Wellington.

Held at the award winning, newly purpose-built conference centre in the hub of Wellington's prestigious waterfront, Te Raukura - Te Wharewaka o Poneke features spectacular views while you'll be engaged with this sector's most exciting and innovative speakers.

## WORKSHOPS

A carefully constructed schedule of 24 workshops has been arranged to engage at all levels of the sector workshops; home & community support, aged residential care or housing for older people, our conference has something to offer.

If you are in leadership, management or service provision, this is the place to build your skills and networks.

## REGISTRATION FEES

**2 Day Early Bird Registration** before March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012: **\$395.00 +GST**

**2 Day Standard Registration** after 2 March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012: **\$445.00 +GST**

**1 Day Early Bird Registration** before March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012: **\$200.00 +GST**

**1 Day Standard Registration** after 2 March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012: **\$250.00 +GST**

**Conference Dinner and entertainment (per person) \$70.00 +GST**

Full registration fee includes: attendance at all conference sessions, morning, afternoon teas and lunches, "Your Time to Shine Soiree", conference programme and information pack. Day registration includes attendance at all sessions on the day, conference programme, related information, morning, afternoon tea and lunch.

## ACCOMMODATION

We are delighted to be able to provide a West Plaza Hotel accommodation package that offers our delegates a comfortable, affordable and convenient stay while at the conference.

## WHAKAWHANAUNGATANGA – MANAAKITANGA

Let's enjoy getting to know each other at the conference social events including a NZ Wine, Cheese and Fruit Soiree and the Conference Dinner featuring an exceptional menu, distinctive NZ flavour's, award winning wines, te reo Māori waiata and international entertainment. Be sure to book your conference dinner ticket via the website - only \$70 per person (+gst).

## NGĀ MIHI

We are pleased to thank our sponsors, exhibitors, supporters and presenters who have agreed to come on board our waka.

The Social Justice Commission of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa & Polynesia, Careerforce - the industry training organization for the health, disability aged support and social services sectors, Mercy Healthcare Group, The Selwyn Foundation and Presbyterian Support New Zealand.

Steering the waka requires teamwork, good coordination and everyone contributing to help "Move Forward Together" across different parts of the sector, the different cultures together with tangata whenua, and different levels of wealth and income.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Direct from Arts Health Institute Australia Jean-Paul Bell has been described as one of Australia's great "humour-manitarians." His keynote and workshops feature "Laughter really is the best medicine: The SMILE study – humour and dementia in aged residential care."



Victoria Matthews is Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Christchurch and Board member of Anglican Care. The earthquake disasters meant that she and others in leadership roles have had to face one of the worst disasters this country has experienced. Her reflections on the challenges and opportunities for governance and leadership of churches and aged care organisations faced with massive damage and disruption can help inspire us all and prepare us to manage challenges for our organisations, communities and the wider sector.



We are delighted to welcome Professor Simon Biggs to New Zealand from the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Australia. He is also Professor at the Gerontology & Social Policy School of Social & Political Sciences, Melbourne University. His keynote address looks at "Re-framing the debate about present & future wellbeing for older people: what we might do differently."



Professor Chris Cunningham is Director, Research Centre for Māori Health & Development, Massey University. He has a leading role in researching what works for older Māori in promoting their health and wellbeing. He is ideally positioned to offer insights into the "Drivers of best outcomes for older Māori – how to move forward together."



Charles Waldegrave QSO is the Coordinator of the Family Centre Pākehā Section and leader of the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit, Lower Hutt. He has an extensive background in therapy and research that has provided the evidence base for considerable public policy debate, and social and economic changes in New Zealand. He is currently one of the principal investigators in the NZ Longitudinal Study on Ageing (NZLSA) that is following 3,317 New Zealanders between the ages of 50 – 84 years.

**REGISTER NOW!**  
[WWW.NZCCSSCONFERENCE2012.ORG](http://WWW.NZCCSSCONFERENCE2012.ORG)





## Aged Care Annual Budget Squeeze

The national Aged Residential Care Steering Group met on 8th December to consider the submissions of various providers and District Health Boards (DHBs) on changes that may be needed to the aged residential care contract. The combination of increasing service costs and quality requirements and statutory changes such as increased employer contributions to Kiwisaver, mean that aged residential care providers are looking to DHB funders to increase the subsidy they pay to support older people in aged residential care. But DHBs have effectively had their funding reduced, as the Government Budget 2011 did not allocate sufficient funds to cover the increase in inflation and population. The shortfall of an estimated \$150 million in total health funding will be borne by those receiving health services, such as older people seeking home and community support services or rest home care. Either they will have to pay more out of their own pocket or face reduced access to services (or possibly both). This is a no-win situation for everybody - DHBs, providers, workers and clients. The only people who are happy about this are the Treasury budget

watchdogs and international credit rating agencies that seem gain some abstract pleasure from seeing Governments paying back debt and interest rather than actually helping their own people.

### There is another way

At the same time, work continues on ways to follow up on the recommendations of the 2010 Aged Residential Care Review. That review recommended investigating other models of care to help give more flexibility to our aged care system and NZCCSS is actively supporting this work to look at supporting housing and home support models that can offer a broader range of alternatives alongside rest homes for older people. Already there are good things happening and the future will need to have forms of residential care that are properly funded and that merge seamlessly with a wide range of alternative forms of care and support that can meet the needs and aspirations of older New Zealanders. Somehow this country has to find a way to negotiate a shared pathway forward that puts people in the centre and is not dominated by short term budget balancing.

## Models of Care that Give Value for Money in Aged Care: National Health Committee

The National Health Committee (NHC) has been seeking comment on referrals from the health sector about value for money of new and existing health services, models of care and technologies. Presbyterian Support NZ submitted an excellent referral on the models of care in for older people. The basis of the PSNZ submission was to emphasise the huge potential for improved services and cost savings through flexible packages of care tailored to client needs with needs assessment centred on the clients/family/whānau and discretion in how funds should be used to best support ageing in place.

Unfortunately, despite their claim to wish to “assist the sector to achieve maximum improvement in health status of all New Zealanders”, they only felt able to allow two weeks for feedback on the 26 referrals they made public. A wide range of referrals were received, and it is only to be hoped that aged care can get some attention in the midst of all the other competing priorities. We urge all those concerned that aged care receive priority contact the NHC and add your voices to the call, even if the formal comment process has closed ([www.nhc.health.govt.nz/2011-referrals-process](http://www.nhc.health.govt.nz/2011-referrals-process)).

## National Dementia Cooperative

Over the past year a National Dementia Cooperative has been forming. They are now inviting interested people to sign up to their website that which is linked through the Health Improvement and Innovation Resource Centre

([www.hiirc.org.nz](http://www.hiirc.org.nz)). The aim is to make information about the Cooperative’s work is readily accessible and available. InSite magazine online has the instructions on how to sign up [www.insitewebpage.co.nz/](http://www.insitewebpage.co.nz/) or contact Kelly/Johnstone@bupa.co.nz

## Legislations and Submissions

### Māori Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the determinants of wellbeing for Māori children

The terms of reference are to inquire into:

1. The historical and current health, education, and welfare profiles of Māori children. This would take account of the transmission of life circumstances between generations, and how this impacts on Māori children.
2. The extent of public investment in Māori children across the health, education, social services, and justice sectors—and whether this investment is adequate and equitable.
3. How public investment in the health, education, social services, and justice can be used to ensure the well-being of Māori children.

4. The social determinants necessary for healthy growth and development for Māori children.
5. The significance of whanau for strengthening Māori children.
6. Policy and legislative pathways to address the findings of this inquiry.

When Parliament re-convenes on 20th December, it is to be hoped that this inquiry will be pursued by the Select Committee but no date for submissions has yet been set.

### Green Paper for Vulnerable Children

The Government has launched a discussion paper to give people and communities a say on how New Zealand can better protect abused, neglected and disadvantaged children. Read our article on page 4. Comment is due by 28 February 2012. To have your say, go to: [www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/](http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/)



# Vulnerable Children – submit your ideas to help

## Green Paper submission writing 101

### Submissions on the Government's Green Paper on Vulnerable Children are due at the 28 February.

#### What do we need to write a decent submission?

Get together with other people and think beyond the questions. The Green Paper asks 43 questions, so detailed replies are difficult for us to do on our own. The Green Paper largely deals with symptoms rather than causes by focusing on services and programmes orientated to vulnerable children. Vulnerable children are a subset of all children, so let's try to keep our children from becoming vulnerable in the first place. Here are some points to consider for your submissions.

#### Why do anything?

##### Children are valuable in themselves

The Christian tradition, the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNROC), and Te Ao Māori all share in valuing children for themselves. We want to avoid the current policy situation where children are too often referred to "as burdens on their parents; as adults-to-be; as victims of adult choices about relationships; and as threats to social order and stability" (CPAG).

##### Relieve suffering

Many children are suffering and too many of them are Māori. Aotearoa New Zealand's willingness to countenance the suffering of its indigenous children is an inter-racial embarrassment. 22% of our children (1 in 3 Māori) live in poverty. Just over half of the 200,000 living in poverty are Māori and Pasifika. Around 70% of beneficiary families live in poverty; however around 40% of poor children live in families where there is full time or self-employment. There are 231,519 benefit dependent children and 84,177 of those are in DPB dependent households with Māori caregivers (36% of all benefit dependent children). Child Youth and Family has 4,116 children in its care (around 50% Māori), and there were 14,968 care and protection notifications requiring further investigation between July and September 2011 (46% Māori).

##### Our future depends on our children

We need healthy, able children to support our ageing population, because the rest of us are dependent on them for our wellbeing. We particularly need our Māori children to thrive. We also need our Pasifika children to thrive. By 2026 the two groups will comprise 40% of all children.

##### We cannot afford NOT to treat our children well

We cannot afford the cost of too many vulnerable children. One estimate of the national costs of child poverty in NZ is around \$8 billion. This incorporates increased earnings capacity, reduced costs and consequences of crime, reduced health costs and savings in social welfare.

#### Get the basics right

NZCCSS wants a context supportive of child wellbeing: universal measures to help our children do well at key life stages, targeted measures to reduce the risks to those most at risk, and quality assistance for those in difficulty. This is "proportionate universality" and it is used in the Australian and Scottish models cited in the Green Paper.

Prime Minister's Science Advisor Sir Peter Gluckman has shown "prevention and intervention strategies applied early in life are more effective in altering outcomes and reap more economic returns over the life course than do prevention and intervention (or punitive) strategies applied later." So it's worth getting the basics right.

##### 1. Reduce poverty

Poverty is associated with family turmoil, violence, instability, chaotic households, lower social support, crowding, neighbourhood degradation, poor healthcare, food and housing, reduced social involvement, reduced educational opportunities; noisier dangerous environments, drug and alcohol use, mental illness, poorer cognitive development, reduced community tolerance and poverty of the human spirit. Unemployment, poor job quality and debt are also associated with a variety of negative indices.

##### 2. Build a more equal society

Reduced inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand could help reduce our obesity levels, mental illness, teenage pregnancy levels, infant mortality, and imprisonment rates. Our children are much better off in a more equal society.

Many children were born to parents affected by the 1991 benefit cuts. Both children and parents now see going without as normal. Accompanying the cuts were low wages, high unemployment, cheap debt, loss of manufacturing and trades jobs, and increased housing costs (reduced housing quality and availability equals poorer child health). Meantime, the wealthiest 20% of the population experienced dramatic increases in income rendering them less likely to identify with those going without, and a destructive widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

##### 3. Valuing ourselves

Culture, identity, meaning and purpose in life all have a part to play. Secure identities help us respect both ourselves and others. Discrimination makes people ill.

##### 4. Foster quality relationships

NZCCSS members also speak of 'relationship poverty.' Yet what are we doing to encourage relationship strength and health? Children do better when they are well loved by both biological parents who are good to each other. Children who are unloved do worse. The evidence about being born wanted, attachment, parental leave, breastfeeding, reduced maternal depression, and sufficient income abounds.

Children living in violent households are more likely to end up abused themselves and abuse others (e.g. playground bullying, juvenile crime, partner abuse). They are more likely to move house to escape the violence resulting in social isolation and loss of friends. The stress can alter brain chemistry and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and/or conduct disorder is common.

It is worth investing in nurturing relationships as living with one parent or non-biological caregivers can be a markers of risk for children, although the directions of causation seem to be unclear.

##### 5. Equitable provision of early childhood education

Good quality early childhood education for 3-5 year olds assists cognitive and social development. "Readiness for school is important predictor of health and wellbeing across a lifetime", (Public Health Advisory Committee).



## Green Paper submission writing 101 (cont'd)

### 6. Reduce drug and alcohol consumption

Both are associated with neglect, violence, poor social functioning, mental illness, intimate partner violence, sexual abuse of children, and risk taking behaviour. It requires reducing Aotearoa New Zealand's heavy drinking culture (e.g. raising the price of alcohol, reducing its marketing and availability effective alcohol and drug programmes).

### 7. Avoid contradictory policies

We would benefit from our children's wellbeing being considered across all our policies. For example, welfare reform could do better if it focused on the wellbeing of our children. One of the results of current welfare reform measures is 14 year olds being left at home alone while their lone parents acquire full time paid work, which is hardly conducive to their future wellbeing.

## Specific Green Paper issues

### 1. Getting started

We all do not have to address all of the issues. Acknowledge the good things in the Green Paper or they may get lost. Include practitioner/client perspectives and grassroots evidence. Powerful evidence is not just from academic literature; it also includes the people who come back to you and say "XYZ really helped because of ABC." Look at what families say has made the difference. Different families value different things. A letter with points on what you think could help with our vulnerable children is a submission. Do write it and send it.

Some have suggested a 'rights-based' approach. New Zealand is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We could take a close look at how well we are implementing it.

For more help, go to [www.occ.org.nz/blog\\_listing](http://www.occ.org.nz/blog_listing), the Children's Commissioner's blog for specific info on Green Paper issues. Other good rules are 'if it's not broken, don't fix it', and, 'where good things are happening, stay out of the way.'

### 2. Vulnerability or Complex Needs?

Challenge the terms of reference. Do you agree vulnerability equals those who without "significant support and intervention, will not thrive, belong or achieve"? We are all born vulnerable, but have different life chances – largely due to the issues raised above. The Green paper does not define 'neglect', and submitters may wish to address this.

NZCCSS member agencies talk about "complex needs" – "having involvement with three or more government departments and involving secondary poverty related issues such as abuse, violence, addiction, illness and social disconnection."

## Sharing responsibility

Government tacitly assumes church groups will address impoverished people's needs. However, church groups do not have unlimited capacity. What is the government's role in developing communities and neighbourhoods? NGOs cannot be used as a lever for the state to opt out. Communities are not well supported to respond, and different communities have different ways of being impoverished. However, interventions at community level are really effective.

Some communities are afraid. At a recent community meeting, comments included "Hapu are told 'you are no

longer responsible for those younger than you' – you now have a fear of doing that [intervening with younger children];" and "the perceived wisdom is that parents are no longer good at raising children – parents have lost confidence; we have lost our number 8 wire mentality; lost our neighbourhoods". As Iosis CEO Ruby Duncan puts it "The community needs to do what it can do; others need to do what the community cannot do".

## Show leadership

NZCCSS supports a Children's Action Plan and wellbeing lens to improve co-ordination of all sectors associated with child wellbeing. Universal baseline provision is critical as it is often difficult to know which children are vulnerable post-natally. Getting the first three years right improves lives, saves money and reduces problems later on. The plan could address the issues raised earlier in the paper, enable targeted measures for communities at risk (e.g. school food provision), and ensure those needing special support have their needs met.

It could also address some existing anomalies, e.g. vulnerable children end being children at age 17 when people are developing until age 25. Then there are the young people with disabilities who are consigned to a lifetime of poverty after age 17 when assistance finishes; and the 14 year olds with lone parents who are expected to be home alone all day.

## Child centred policy changes

### Information sharing

NZCCSS agencies are opposed to mandatory reporting and worry it can get confused with cross agency information sharing. There is voluntary information sharing now, but 80% of children killed each year have not come to the attention of anyone. Agencies fear that mandatory reporting could mean people will not seek help for their children when there needs to be every encouragement for parents in trouble to get the assistance they require. Family service approaches have been shown to be more effective than child protection approaches. We also know home visiting programmes can be very effective. The Sure Start programme in the UK has good outcomes and is well evaluated – it has similarities to Well Child but goes further. Submitters may also want to look at work on wrap-around services and improving school readiness in the Hawkes Bay published by Russell Wills (Children's Commissioner).

### Trading-off services

We are concerned the question about trading off services is asked in an unfair way (e.g. it is poor people's services which are being traded off). Other possibilities include increasing funding via increased alcohol excise tax or reduced military spending in Afghanistan. We do acknowledge there can be tensions around mental wellbeing of adults and the welfare needs of children, but do not want to prioritise one group over another.

## Child centred practice changes

Working with families with complex needs can take a long time. We note we can have 30 year plans for roads, but not for the wellbeing of our population. Often there is only 8-12 weeks to sort out a lifetime of problems. NZCCSS would like





## Green Paper submission writing 101 (cont'd)

to see a better understanding of the change process and how not doing it well enough results in high social costs. Often, no one pays attention to people's support networks when the professionals go home. Good social work does make a difference; but this does not necessarily mean compulsory registration. NZCCSS wishes to ensure good social workers are not marginalised in their profession through non-registration.

### Next steps

## "Bah, humbug!" Inequality past, present and yet to come...

By Gillian Bemner, CEO PS Otago

At the time when Dunedin was first being settled, London was the centre of the largest empire ever known. Wealth flowed into London from all corners of the globe, and for Britain it was a time of unparalleled prosperity and progress.

For the majority, though, the London of the day wasn't a good place to raise a family. Oliver Twist, David Copperfield and Mister Micawber are fictional characters, but Dickens drew them from those he could see around them, and from his own childhood experiences. London may have been the wealthiest city in the world, but that wealth was very unevenly spread. And that in a nutshell is the problem with capitalism: left unchecked it always takes us toward a version of Dickensian London.

Of course, the poor in Dickens day had an alternative. Many of them left to build a better life on the other side of the world. Some of them came here, and some of those were determined to build a better and fairer society – and by and large they have succeeded. But we have to guard their dream.

The history of our society is, at least in part, a series of attempts to apply just the right amount of restraint. We want the progress and prosperity that capitalism can bring, but we don't want the downside experienced by Dickens. Few of us want to live in a society where orphans are forced into petty crime to survive, or where only those who can afford food get to eat.

New Zealand has been a pioneer in social welfare, labour reform, no fault accident compensation, state housing and many other initiatives. We have experimented with steeply progressive tax systems, means tested pensions, milk and more recently fruit in schools and so on. All of these were intended to restrain or lessen inequality.

In the last two or three decades, inequality has been

NZCCSS is working with other organisations to prepare an on-line resource for submissions and a charter for all children (see [www.nzccss.org.nz](http://www.nzccss.org.nz)). How we treat our vulnerable children depends on what sort of society we wish to have. If, as our Church Leaders are saying, we want to ensure "everyone has a just share of society's wealth." Vulnerable children matter in themselves.

growing again after sweeping economic reform and deregulation of labour markets. NZ achieved the fastest growing gap between the rich and poor in the developed world. Disparities have only recently plateaued following the introduction of Working for Families tax credits and declining investment returns for the wealthiest.

The Octagon is occupied by protestors as I write. The Occupy movement is saying that it is time to increase the restraints on capitalism again. The debate should not be about WHERE or HOW the protest is being staged but WHAT the protest is about. In New Zealand the richest 1 percent of the population owns three times more the combined cash and assets of the poorest 50 percent. The Chief Executive of one of the mainstream banks in NZ earns an annual salary of \$5 million while we have over 200,000 children living in poverty and rank ninth worst in the developed world in the gap between the rich and poor. Several thousand years ago a gentleman was saying things like "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven"; and "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise". The message wasn't overly popular then, and it certainly wasn't popular amongst the well to do in Dickensian London.

We are kidding ourselves if we think we live in an equal society. The poverty that exists in New Zealand persists because we continue to tolerate it.

We aspire to a future where no New Zealander is left behind. We need to thank the Occupiers for their determination, commitment and courage in highlighting the issues. It is time for us to reflect and consider the kind of society and community we want for our children and for future generations and as Ghandi said 'be the change you want to see in the world'





**Nettie Holm,**  
**Team Leader**  
**Te Whanau Putahi, Waikato**

Growing up in the '50's in a rural community of relative comfort I was not aware of any families who were really struggling to feed and clothe their children, all the other children seemed just like me. Rich people were those who owned their own home or farm. We were share-milking at the time so were not yet in that category.

In reality it wasn't until my adult years (mid 20's) that I realised, to my absolute horror, that there were people who were really struggling. They were 'poor' and it was nothing to do with not owning a house or farm!

Now that I live and work in a poor community in NZ I am daily reminded how much the gap between the 'rich' and the 'poor' is growing. I see and hear of all the options available to my friend's families; in contrast, I sit with my friends in this community and recognize the huge disparity. For the latter, choice is severely limited! Choice is a luxury when it comes to healthy food, school trips/camps/electives, engagement in sports teams or music tuition. When there is simply not enough money these luxuries are beyond reach. What does this do to a parent who wants the best for their child?

Children are the most vulnerable and it is they who ultimately suffer. Their suffering should be our suffering. Their future is our future. We neglect the issues of inequality at our peril. We in Aotearoa are cultivating health problems, educational and social problems for the future which will cost us dearly. One focus of Closer Together Whakatata Mai is about addressing the gap between the rich and the poor so that all children have access to what is required for their healthy development.

### **What do I hope will happen...**

- That awareness of the growing gap between the rich and the poor will spread throughout Aotearoa and in response to that we will all be looking for opportunities to share our resources and advocate for the struggling.
- That there will be a commitment as a country to a 'brighter future' for ALL people of Aotearoa. This may well mean we need to stop our incessant comparing of ourselves with other economies. Find creative and generous ways of simply living and giving instead of being 'market driven'.
- A fairer tax system over all forms of 'income'.
- That places of employment are encouraged to develop a 'wage formula' so that there is less inequality between the lowest paid and the highest paid (including all extras).
- Remove GST off fruit and vegetables.
- Suitable housing for all people (space, insulation and location).
- Review of the adequacy of present benefits to live on. Benefits to include an 'Activity Allowance' (like disability Allowance) for school age children so parents can access funds for sports involvement and special school activities.

In the end Closer Together Whakatata Mai is a campaign which must start with us as individuals/ families and the organizations we represent. We must ask ourselves what we are doing to reduce the gap both relationally and financially. What steps we can take as an organization to reduce inequality among our own staff? How can we influence others beyond our immediate organization?



**Kim Workman**  
**Director Rethinking Crime & Punishment**

The connection between poverty, inequality and injustice is irrefutable. Increasingly, income inequality leads to the formation of marginalised communities, and a hardening of political and public attitudes toward those who live in them. The political practise of identifying victims as "good people" and offenders as "bad people" ignores the fact that 50% of all victimizations are experienced by only 6% of New Zealanders and that the social and demographic indicators that identify those who are most likely to be victimized are identical to the markers for those likely to be offenders. In other words, they come from the same communities.

During his struggle for civil rights, Martin Luther King, Jr. was imprisoned for his public "disobedience" in protesting the injustice of inequality and discrimination suffered by African Americans. Writing from Birmingham Jail he observed prophetically that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." When one group in society is allowed to suffer chronic injustice, society itself will be neither safe nor secure.

Inasmuch as injustice reflects the immorality of people and society, justice reflects the moral character of society. Justice in any society is not only about how we respond to crime and treat offenders – it is comprehensively about advancing and protecting the wellbeing and peace of all people in that society.

I pray that Whakatata Mai will bring us closer to the vision for a safe and peaceful society.



**Father Rob Devlin**  
**Catholic Social Services, Wellington**

A good guide for life is the proverb "he aha te mea nui o te ao? "What is of most importance in the world?" He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.... It is people. People are our most precious resource. Developments that divide; lessen the value of people; make some people seemingly more important than others; actions which are not for the common good ..... these things are do not benefit our world. The growing divide between people lessens the whole of humanity. Whakatata Mai encourages us to attend to this growing divide; support actions and endeavours that enhance the value of all people.

As is already becoming apparent here in Aotearoa New Zealand, and among people of other lands – there is a growing awareness of inequality. Filled with belief in the goodness of people, my hope is that Whakatata Mai and other actions and programmes addressing this divide, will turn us into a more caring and sharing community.



## A Year of Highs and Lows.



By Ruby Duncan, NZCCSS President

This last year will be remembered for the Pike River disaster, the Christchurch Earthquakes, the oil spill in Tauranga and the Rugby World Cup success. Huge tragedies and enormous excitement. Great highs and great lows.

I am not sure if 2011 will be remembered for welfare reform, or the enormous leaps in the cost of basic products. I am not sure it will be remembered for the crisis in housing, or the beginnings of the baby boomers hitting retirement.

It would be awesome if it was remembered for the beginnings of a movement that rises up to protest the increasing income disparity; the beginnings of a critical awareness that we are sliding towards a more and more stratified society marked by the haves and the have-nots. It would take great moral courage for us to be that nation, which seeks the good of all, above the on-going benefit of the few. It would need us to be a nation of big vision and determination to admit that despite all efforts, Māori experience of employment, imprisonment, early childhood, teen pregnancy, education and life expectancy, still lag far behind that of all other ethnic groups. We would have to be brutally honest with ourselves to accept that tax decreases for the wealthy, come at the expense of the poor.

NZCCSS is committed to putting hard and often unpalatable truths before our nation and our leaders. It can often feel that we are working against a tide, and our call for a compassionate and just society does not always meet an enthusiastic response. This does not discourage us, as we are committed to the way of Jesus which is to prioritise the weak, vulnerable, lost and poor.

This last year has been somewhat chaotic for many of our members, particularly those in Christchurch, many of whom lost buildings and essential services. As they rebuild, we are inspired by the Christchurch community which is pulling together for their future. There is a sense in Christchurch of renewed vision for whole community. They must have a long term view in order to rebuild a city that will benefit as many as possible. May this spirit of compassionate community inspire us all. May we have long term vision and consider what kind of nation we would have ourselves be. May we rise up to protest the increasing inequalities. May we have courage to sacrifice the benefits of a few, of the powerful and the rich, for the sake of the weak, vulnerable, lost and poor.



*Ngā mihi o te wā. Ahakoa ngā nawe o te wā, ko te rū ki Otautahi, ko te korohū ki te rua waro ki Pike, ko te horongā o te moni ki te ao, kei te tohe ngā atua Māori. Kua mahue ēna āhuatanga ki muri. Kua huri ngā moemoeā ki te tau e heke mai nei. Kia pupū ake te humārie, kia tau te rangimārie, kia mārama ai te huarahi kei mua i a tātau. He maunga rongo ki te whenua he whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa o te ao. Ngā mihi nui mō te kirihimete me te tau hou.*

## SSPA Seminar Series on the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children

### Dates, Times and Venues:

**Auckland**, 1 February, Waipuna Lodge, Derrick Cole Theatre, Mt Wellington, 10.30am to 4pm

**Wellington**, 2 February, St Johns in the City, at the corner of Willis and Dixon St, 10.30am to 4pm

**Christchurch**, 8 February, St Albans Baptist Church, 64 McFaddens Rd, St Albans, 10.30am to 4pm

**Dunedin**, 9 February, Hutton Theatre, Otago Museum, 10.30am to 4pm

### Fees:

Free to SSPA members, but numbers are limited so you will need to register. \$20 for non-SSPA members to assist with catering costs.

### Registration:

Please register with Marama Jackson at [info@sspa.org.nz](mailto:info@sspa.org.nz) [www.sspa.org.nz](http://www.sspa.org.nz)

## Save the Date!

### Future Wellbeing:

### Social Services for New Zealand's Future

18 – 19 April 2012 at the University of Auckland's Faculty of Engineering.

This will be followed on **20 April 2012** by a day focussed on Auckland's social future.

**Auckland Futures: Co-creating Auckland Social Futures**

Visit [www.socialservicesconf.org.nz](http://www.socialservicesconf.org.nz) for further information



**NZCCSS Secretariat: Our offices will be closed from Friday 23 December 2011 – Wednesday 4 January 2012.**

## KETE KUPU WORD BASKET

### Designer

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### Printers

Thames Publications Wellington



### KETE KUPU - Word Basket

ISSN 1174-2514 (Print), 1174-2526 (Online)

The newsletter of the NZ Council of Christian Social Services

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Physical address: 3 George Street, Thorndon (ground floor)

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**Acknowledgements:** In addition to its member subscriptions, NZCCSS extends its thanks to: Todd Foundation, JR McKenzie Trust, TG Macarthy Trust for the grants and donations that help to make the work of NZCCSS possible.

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